

House Armed Services Committee Member Day
“Member Priorities for the National Defense Authorization Act FY27”
Wednesday, April 15, at 10:00 AM in 2118 RHOB
Congressman Barrett’s Remarks

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and members of this committee: thank you for holding this hearing for the opportunity to share my priorities as you begin drafting the 2027 National Defense Authorization Act.

The United States must keep our military the strongest in the world to deter our adversaries and keep our nation at peace. The NDAA is central to that mission, not only taking care of the men and women who wear the uniform every single day, but also making sure that America is, and will remain, free.

Today, I’d like to highlight two priorities for this year’s bill.

First, ensuring the safety of military aircraft in civilian airspace.

I was proud to advance the ALERT Act, which took important steps to ensure that the tragic crash over the Potomac last year never happens again.

But we cannot stop with just that one bill. The Pentagon must learn from its mistakes, and that starts with closing the loopholes that put military pilots and civilian travelers in harm’s way by allowing non-sensitive military rotary wing aircraft to operate with ADS-B Out turned off.

My bill, **H.R. 7240, the Military ADS-B Out Loophole Act**, would do just that. Turning off lifesaving technology should be reserved only for truly sensitive missions, not routine flights.

In addition, we must ensure these systems, when in use, are fully functional.

This is why I was also proud to lead **H.R. 8072, the Safety in Shared Skies Act**, which requires ADS-B Out systems to be tested every 90 days. Regular testing is a commonsense step to ensure that critical safety equipment works when it matters most.

While some aspects of my bills were included in the ALERT Act, I strongly urge the Committee to incorporate them into the NDAA to set standards across the Department.

My second priority is restoring the promise made to our veterans and servicemembers.

When an American signs the dotted line to join the military, they do so with the understanding that Washington will keep its promises. One of those promises is the G.I. Bill — a commitment to help service members and their families pursue educational opportunities.

As you are well aware, the Department of War allows service members the opportunity to transfer their unused education benefits to their spouse or children.

Here's the problem: thousands of service members have now been denied the opportunity to transfer their G.I. benefits to their children because of politics.

Due to the COVID-19 mandate, many healthy, brave men and women who had made the commitment to continue serving our country were forced to choose between receiving the vaccine, or being involuntarily discharged from the military.

These weren't disciplinary separations; they were honorable servicemembers who were forced out before reaching the ten years of service required to transfer their G.I. benefits to their children.

That was wrong, and we need to fix it.

That is why I introduced **H.R. 3619, the Patriots over Politics Act**, a bill to restore the ability for a veteran to transfer their G.I. benefits to their children if they were voluntarily or involuntarily separated due to the COVID vaccine.

This bill corrects an injustice caused by a political decision that never should have interfered with military careers or family futures.

I look forward to working with this committee to advance these priorities in the NDAA and to continue strengthening both our military readiness and our commitment to those who serve.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I yield back.